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FM AMEMBASSY DILI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3976
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1065
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 1177
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 0033
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 0945
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 0862
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE 1043
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 3418

C O N F I D E N T I A L DILI 000124

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/29/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [TT](#)
SUBJECT: FEBRUARY 11 ATTACKERS IN CUSTODY

REF: A) DILI 121, B) DILI 118

CLASSIFIED BY: Henry M. Rector, Charge d'affaires, U.S. Embassy
Dili, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (U) Following a weekend of negotiation in Ermera District, Lieutenant Gastao Salsinha, surviving leader of the perpetrators of the February 11 attacks against Timor-Leste President Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, arrived in Dili on Tuesday, April 29 with twelve of his followers to surrender. Among them is Marcelo Caetano, suspected of firing the shots that seriously wounded President Ramos-Horta.

¶2. (U) The group traveled from Ermera to Dili in a convoy including representatives of the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (an NGO which has facilitated the process), an aide to President Ramos-Horta, several priests, Prosecutor General Longhinos Monteiro, Member of Parliament Eduardo Barreto "Dusae," and others. They formally turned themselves over at the Palacio do Governo to Speaker of Parliament "Lasama" de Araujo and Deputy Prime Minister Jose Luis Guterres. Dr. Atul Khare, head of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), was also present. Lasama made a brief statement welcoming the fact that Salsinha had turned himself in without violence. The GOTL has announced, however, that the current State of Siege (which in its latest version only impacts Ermera District) will remain in effect and the joint military-police operation will continue, since two of Salsinha's followers remain at large.

¶3. (U) President Ramos-Horta appeared at the Palacio and made a statement to the effect while he was "as a man" prepared to forgive the shooters, they would nonetheless have to face justice since it was attack on a head of state.

¶4. (U) Later in the afternoon, Salsinha and his followers were present at a press conference held at the headquarters of the Joint Command. Although they did not speak, Lt. Col. Koliati described the weapons turned over (nine HK33 automatic rifles, two pistols, almost 1400 rounds of ammunition and 16 magazines. He said that the two fugitives still at large have until May 10 to surrender.

¶5. (U) For the next 48 hours, Salsinha and his men will be in custody of the Joint Command. They will then be moved to a "safe house" already occupied by some of his erstwhile followers. The building is a comfortable facility, recently renovated for use

as the Portuguese Defense Cooperation office.

¶6. (C) Comment. We do not yet know what conditions Salsinha agreed to in the terms of his surrender. Two factors may have been decisive in the timing. The first is the absence from Dili of Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, who is on an official visit to Indonesia. The conflict between the Reinado/Salsinha group and Xanana Gusmao had become highly personalized, and the fact that Salsinha was able to turn himself in to Lasama enabled him to save face. Lasama himself has been intensely involved in the negotiation process in recent days, and was visibly preoccupied at an April 24 dinner hosted by the Ambassador. The second factor is, unfortunately, the pardon announced by President Ramos-Horta for former Minister of the Interior Rogerio Lobato (reftel B). Salsinha may well believe (and may even have been given to understand) that if leniency is forthcoming for a man like Lobato, he might have little to fear from an eventual prosecution. End comment.
RECTOR